

OPINION

The Business Journal welcomes letters to the editor

Investment in Central Florida Research Park is good for the local economy

It could be easy to mistake the Florida Legislature's \$20 million appropriation to the UCF Partnership Complex in the Central Florida Research Park as something only benefiting the military and big business, but Floridians should take heart and know that our legislative leadership continues to invest in a \$5 billion statewide cluster that includes hundreds of companies — many small like mine — that make up this incredible economic asset and jobs provider.

House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, in particular, deserves our thanks for spearheading the investment that will provide for the necessary shared space that houses both University of Central Florida faculty and student researchers and their military counterparts who staff Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine commands there, and are responsible for the creation of the world's most advanced simulation technologies.

Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs has been a leader on this issue, as well, appointing more than 30 community and industry leaders to her MS&T Blue Ribbon Commission. They have worked for more than a year to highlight the critical value of this sector and have served as ambassadors to the Legislature as it considered this appropriation.

I can only imagine that most of our neighbors think of the military activity in the Research Park and conjure up images of weaponry, combat



training and the like. And while that is certainly at the roots of this incredible enterprise that has grown up all across Florida, you might be surprised by the specialty applications that are being developed.

One area, in particular, that has the potential to impact every one of us is modeling and simulation for medical training. Those training tools created from contracts issued by the military in the Research Park likely started from a need for battlefield scenarios, but they quickly make their way into training environments closer to home.

For instance, my company focuses on developing anatomical models. We fill critical training gaps with cost-effective solutions, first for the military, but eventually with broad applications in the private sector.

Florida has become the world leader in MS&T. We are home to the National Center for Simulation, UCF's Institute for Simulation & Training and annually host the world's largest trade show for representatives of both the military and private sectors from around the world — adding to the economic impact of this industry.

Thanks to all who have worked so hard to see that we continue this leadership role.

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